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ABSTRACT

This paper provides suggestions for obtaining a job--specifically, filling out employment applications, writing resumes, and going to job interviews. It lists tips for completing employment applications and includes samples of resumes as well as a step-by-step list of things to include in a resume. The section on employment interviews includes a list of the questions employers are most likely to ask, as well as suggested answers to some of these questions. Finally, the paper stresses the necessity of writing a thank-you note for an employment interview and provides a model note. (KC)

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GET THAT JOB!

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TIPS ON APPLICATION COMPLETION

Whether or not you acknowledge it, filling out the application is a test in and of itself. It may well create the "first impression" the employer will get of you. To avoid errors in completing the application, consider the following tips:

Read the entire application completely before filling it out. Nothing looks worse than a series of "crossed-out" lines or pieces of information and leads the employer to believe you did not take the time to "look ahead" and plan accordingly.

Whenever possible, take the application home to fill it out neatly or type it. This allows you the relaxed atmosphere in which to maximize information recall, minimize spelling or punctuation errors, and to print information neatly or type it.

If it is not possible to take the application with you, prepare one sheet with all the information you'll need to complete your application. Take along this sheet of paper on which you have listed 1) all your education (including dates of attendance, as well as degrees and credits earned), and 2) all prior jobs, addresses, supervisor's names and numbers, dates of employment, beginning and ending salaries, and job duties. Also write out names, addresses and phone numbers of at least three references you plan to use. It can be embarrassing to have to ask the secretary or receptionist for a phone book in which to look up the information on people you supposedly know fairly well. Include any other pertinent information as well, so that you will be able to complete the application with ease.

When listing references, make sure to call and ask their permission to do so first. Nothing can diminish your credibility with the employer like having your reference say "who?" when they get a reference call, simply because they weren't asked first and were caught off guard.

If you are not a good speller, carry a small pocket dictionary with you to assure proper spelling. Again, the application may be the first impression the employer has of you, so put your best foot forward (on paper).

Make sure you sign and date your application! Surprisingly, 2 or 3 out of every 10 applicants neglect to do this, and it may slow down the entire job search process for you.

Attach a resume' to the application whenever possible.

IF I'M SENDING A RESUME', WHY DO I NEED A COVER-LETTER?

There's a difference between the two: a resume' talks about all the things you have done, in terms of education and experience. The cover letter, on the other hand, relates your skills and experiences to a specific job and tells the employer what you will do for them.

The cover letter is usually composed of three paragraphs:

1. In the first, let the employer know why you're writing, how and where you heard about the job, and why you're interested.

2. The second paragraph should show the employer how your training and experience meet his needs. Talk about a few of your relevant qualifications and refer to your enclosed resume.

3. Your third paragraph should contain a summary statement of your skills, as well as a "thank-you" to the contact person for their time. Close by identifying a specific time at which you will contact that person. Below is a sample copy of a cover letter incorporating the points discussed above:

000 Linden Lane
Waukesha, WI 53188

March 3, 1988

Ms. Mary Jones
Teaching Centers, Inc.
000 Clahoun Rd.
Brookfield, WI 53005

Dear Ms. Jones:

I wish to apply for the teacher aide position that was advertised in the March 3, 1988 issue of the Waukesha Freeman. From the position you describe, it would appear that patience, flexibility and a sincere commitment to childhood development are some of the more important traits you seek. Because I feel these are among my strongest skills, I would like you to consider me a serious applicant.

I will soon be completing a one-year degree in Child Care Services from Waukesha County Technical College. As a part of my curriculum, I have taken classes in childhood growth and development, special education, and classroom procedures and activities. In addition, I have had the opportunity to transfer my classroom work to three field experience activities. As you can see from my enclosed resume, I have had the opportunity to work with professionals at the Waukesha County Technical College Child-Parent Center, the Kinder-Care Learning Center in Waukesha, and the Happy Care Day Care Center in Hartland. These experiences have given me the opportunity to work with children in several age categories and in a variety of functions. In addition, I volunteer as a Bible school teacher for pre-schoolers at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Waukesha.

With the combination of my schooling and volunteer background, I believe I can bring a solid background to the job you have to offer. I would appreciate speaking with you about the specifics of this job, and will call your office by March 10th to set up an appointment. Thank you for your time in considering my application.

Sincerely,

Amy K. Friendly

Note: This person strengthens their first paragraph by identifying the apparent skills necessary to do the job well (gotten simply by reading the job description). By identifying them as her strong skills, she leads the employer early on to believe she is the appropriate person for the job. Likewise, the first sentence of her closing paragraph again sums up her appropriateness for the job.

"HOW DO I WRITE A RESUME?"

A Guide to Resume Development

If you are like most people, it may have been awhile since you wrote your last resume. Or perhaps you have not needed to worry about one at all until now. In either case, putting together a resume may seem an overwhelming task if you're not sure where to start. This guide has been developed to assist you through the resume-writing process.

THE RESUME--DO I REALLY NEED ONE?

When beginning the search for a job, either full- or part-time, it becomes necessary for you to put together an informational piece about yourself to introduce yourself to potential employers. This document--summarizing your education, skills and experience--is called a resume or professional profile. The time and effort which you spend in preparing it may well make a difference, so consider carefully all the categories you will want to include and the format you choose.

Ultimately getting the job you want depends on a lot of different factors, but whether or not you get an interview depends heavily on your resume. Think of it as your own personal 30-second commercial highlighting your achievements and skills. Remember, the resume is very likely the first exposure the potential employer may have to you, and you only have one chance to make that first impression. While you want to be sure to include only truthful statements, how the information is phrased and presented may make a significant difference.

One thing every student should know is that there is no one "right" way to do a resume. There are a number of excellent publications on the subject, and if you do some research, you will find that a lot of good resume examples are rarely identical. The only "right" resume is the one with whose information you feel comfortable and one which nets you job interviews. Therefore, consider this hand-out as a guide only in taking you through the resume process.

While you need to be wary of "experts" who insist there is only one specific format to follow, there <u>are</u> certain categories you will want to address so that the employer does not feel you are avoiding sharing important information with them. These categories include the following:

1. PERSONAL DATA BLOCK

   Include your full name and address, as well as phone number with area code. Recommendation: Do not include such information as height, weight, and marital or health status. Such notations rarely lend substantive information to the employer in terms of the job for which you are applying. Should any of those categories be an actual proven condition for employment, you will be asked to provide additional information later if you are a serious contender for the job.

2. **CAREER OBJECTIVE**

Including a statement about your job goal(s) can help the employer develop a focus for all the information which follows, as well as state immediately what you are seeking. Career objective statements are now effective when stated in terms specific enough to relate to the job for which you are applying. The statement can be short and concise as in:

Career Objective: Administrative Assistant - Legal Office

Or, you can be more specific and indicate the types of skills you would like to use:

Career Objective: To seek a position which will use my knowledge of accounting and microcomputers in a manufacturing environment.

3. **EDUCATION**

List the last school you have attended, including dates, major course of study, and any degrees/diplomas earned. It is recommended that you do not include your high school; since you are listing post-secondary training, the assumption is that you have already graduated from high school.

Current students my want to consider adding a section under "Education" identifying which major courses have been completed to date. This is especially helpful if you are changing careers or do not have a great deal of experience in the field in which you are training. This tactic not only identifies your skills further to a potential employer, it convinces him/her that you are serious about your decision to enter and pursue this field.

If your grade point average is 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale, you may wish to add it to this section as a means of sharing your academic abilities with the resume reader.

4. **ACQUIRED SKILLS**

As part of your research for your resume, you will want to begin listing actual skills that you have (see sample resume). First list those skills which can most effectively be transitioned to or used in the new job, and conclude with skills that may be more peripheral.

5. **WORK EXPERIENCE**

How you elect to describe your work skills depends upon whether you decide to use a chronological format for your resume or a functional one (see section on "Format" to help you select the most appropriate one). Since the chronological format focuses on highlighting each individual job, you will want to clearly identify each employer (beginning with your most recent), as well as dates of employment, job titles and related duties. Focus for the functional format is on grouping acquired

skills, and while it does notate employers, it downplays individual positions and many time omits dates of employment.

No matter which format you choose, both require you to develop short, concise phrases to describe your duties and responsibilities. The recommendation is to avoid using complete sentences beginning with the noun "I". Professional employer feedback encourages students to use "action" verbs to describe their work experiences. You may find it helpful to review the following list of verbs so that you can pinpoint some of your specific skills.

"Managed...wrote...reported...directed...trained...
organized...planned...designed...developed..."

Do any of these words describe things you've done in the past? If so, use them!

updated	built	recommended
balanced	devised	reported
trained	designed	developed
handled	wrote	computed
assembled	expedited	sponsored
approved	managed	increased
improved	established	distributed
formulated	expanded	communicated
unified	hired	modernized
scheduled	assisted	consulted
achieved	illustrated	created
advised	reorganized	counselled

6. REFERENCES

The reference section of your resume is generally found at the close of the document. As such, it usually states that "business and personal references will gladly be furnished upon request." The names, titles, addresses and telephone numbers of your references are usually typed on a separate sheet of paper; since you may need to select different references for different types of jobs you seek, this will eliminate the need for you to re-type any portion of your resume which listed specific references.

It is a good idea to be prepared to provide at least three references including former work supervisors, teachers or counselors, or others who can speak will about your abilities. As a tip: Be sure to contact your references and ask their permission to use them as such. Nothing can shatter a potential employer's confidence in you more than calling a reference who has to ask "who?" when your name is mentioned simply because you neglected to call them first!

In addition, you may want to consider including one or more of these "optional" categories if you have entries to fill them. While they are not necessary, they provide an employer with a more complete "picture" of you on paper.

1. **AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

Remembering again that your resume is your commercial, feel free to use this section to list any accomplishments or awards you've earned related to academics, job performance or community service. Keep statements short by listing the award the sponsoring agent, and the year.

Example: "Student of the Year" Award Recipient, Waukesha County Technical College, 1988.

2. **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

Use this section if you can show past or current membership in any professional organization. Again, cite your membership status, the organization name, and year(s) of service.

Example: Treasurer, Milwaukee County Data Processing Professionals, 1987 to present.

3. **CIVIC ACTIVITIES**

Include this section if you have done any fairly recent community service work. Take your time in thinking back to any fund drives you may have participated in, any volunteer work provided, any church-related service work, any committees served on, etc. Each of these activities tells the employer that you have a commitment to your community and creates a better understanding of some of your more "non-quantifiable" skills. These may include the ability to work well with people as a team member, your organizational abilities, ability to act as a project leader, patience levels, etc.

Example: Fund Drive Coordinator, March of Dimes-Waukesha Chapter, 1987-88
Volunteer Teacher, K-Y Day Camp, 1988 to present

4. **HOBBIES AND INTERESTS**

While many students question the validity of including this on a resume, listing hobbies or activities which related directly to your career goals or indirectly to your skills may work in your favor.

Example: If you are a nursing student and indicate that "counted cross-stitch" is a favorite hobby, the employer may conclude that the orientation to detail and patience required for that activity will indicate those same traits on-the-job. With this information, use your discretion in interests and activities you select to showcase.

FORMATS

Now that you have an "outline" of topics you will want to consider, you need to look at the most effective order in which you put your information. In general, there are two types of formats you can use as a guideline for writing your resume: chronological or functional.

The chronological resume is one in which your individual work experiences are highlighted and listed in a logical time sequence, citing your most recent job first. Because of it's logical sequence, this format is the one most preferred. It can work to your advantage if you can show steady, progressive work experience or if you are seeking to move ahead in an established career path. Using a composite of the categories, you should consider including in a resume, we have written a sample copy to illustrate our point:

NAME
STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE, ZIP
HOME PHONE NUMBER

EDUCATION:

Master of Science in Human Resources Management, Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Bachelor of Science in Sociology and History, Carroll College, Waukesha, Wisconsin

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Employer Development Technician

1985 to Present — Waukesha County Technical Institute, Pewaukee, Wisconsin

Responsible for recruiting, interviewing, advising and placing students in Cooperative Education jobs. Also responsible for assisting students in developing resume writing and interviewing skills. Work with local area employers in developing training job sites for students in the following programs: Administrative Assistant/Secretarial, Business Data Processing, Accounting, Property Assessment/ Appraisal, Nursing and Police Science. Maintain files and recordkeeping data.

Job Training Assistant

1979 to 1985 — Waukesha County Technical Institute, Pewaukee, Wisconsin

Responsible for interviewing and placing students into various federally - funded training programs. Also involved in proposal writing and all monthly statistical reports.

Administrative Assistant

1978 to 1979 — Voluntary Action Center, Pewaukee, Wisconsin

Responsible for interviewing, referring and placing clients in various volunteer worksites. Also, provided all clerical support for office staff.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Member, American Association of Women in Community and Junior Colleges Community and Junior Colleges
- Member, Data Processing Management Association
- Member, Business Occupations Advisory Committee, WCTI
- Chair, Publicity Committee, 1988 WCEA Conference

While the functional resume also identifies past positions, it focuses on categorizing your various skills without attributing them to any specific job. This format allows the writer more flexibility in showcasing skills relating directly to the job applied for, while downplaying others. If you have an established work record and are seeking to change careers or vocational direction, this format allows you to show the employer how your current skills can "transition" into your new career choice.

This format might also be the choice for someone who has not worked in a long period of time and needs to focus on capabilities rather than chronological dates of employment to develop a strong resume. It may also help the unpaid volunteer worker identify skills that correlate to business world needs. Again, using a composite of the categories listed previously, we have put together a resume using the functional format.

Professional Profile

NAME
STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE, ZIP
HOME PHONE NUMBER

Education

- Master of Science Degree, Criminal Justice
  University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1983
- Bachelor of Arts degree, History and Political science
  Carroll College-Waukesha, Wisconsin 1974
- Certificate, Jail Operations and Administration
  National Institute of Corrections-Washington, D.C. 1979
- Certificates, Communications and Leadership/Management
  United States Naval Base-San Diego, California 1975

Summary of Qualifications

Supervision/Management

- Supervision and coordination of work activity of up to 22 personnel in four work centers
- Understanding and implementation of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action policies
- Use of basic computer readouts in screening and reporting for MIS planning and control of classified material

Training

- Designed, developed and implemented training programs and policies in both military and civilian employment, resulting in improved staff efficiency and functioning

Corrections

- Maintained inmate discipline and enforced regulations, including the use of force. Was employed in maximum security facilities in both adult and juvenile correctional settings
- Responsibility for inmate files, incident reporting and all aspects of booking procedures

Communications

- Experienced in counseling, facilitating group discussions, lecturing and interpersonal communications
- Responsibility for policy formulation, report-writing and training development
- Maintained liason with law enforcement agencies, courts, government agencies and general public

Work History

- CORRECTIONS OFFICER for Waukesha County Sheriff's Department. Duties included supervision of inmates and visitors, security procedures, detection of contraband, inmate processing and officer training. 1979 to present.
- CRISIS COUNSELOR at Ethan Allen school, State Division of Corrections, in Wales, Wisconsin. Responsibilities included inmate counseling for defusion of potentially dangerous confrontations, security and juvenile discipline. 1977-1978.
- LIEUTENANT, UNITED STATES NAVY. Served aboard three combatant commands as Gunnery Officer, Missile Officer and Signals Officer. Responsible for all assigned personnel, conning and combat information center operation. 1974-1977.

References

- Available upon request.

The choice of format is yours, as is the order in which you choose to arrange your categories.

Here are some additional suggestions you might consider in making your resume as professional as possible:

1. Keep the resume to two pages or less. The trend for the one-page resume is over. It is perfectly acceptable to submit a two-page resume, providing you have substantive information to include. Creating a resume in excess of two pages should signal to you that you may be including too much specific information, thereby losing the reader's interest and defeating the effectiveness and purpose of your resume.

2. Allow for plenty of white space. In each of the resume examples, you will note that there is ample "white space" between informational categories. This makes for "easy" reading and identification of qualifications. Do stay away from writing full single-spaced paragraphs, as information that is not easily discernible will lose the interest of the reader quickly. Remember: Your resume is a 30-second commercial for you. How much of it can the reader comfortably learn from it in that time?

3. Allow someone else whose proof reading skills you value to read it. Another pair of eyes looking over the resume can help spot spelling or grammatical errors that might slip past you.

   If you have any questions as to the appropriateness of specific items, make an appointment to see a resource professional who can help you.

4. Keep resume typing and copying professional. Avoid running photocopies of your resume on copy machine quality paper. Take one good, clean copy of your resume to a local printer. Make sure you have used an easy-to-read typeface (like "Gothic"), and use a carbon ribbon or letter-quality printer to produce the work. Using "script" or dot-matrix lettering detracts from the readability, and ultimately, the professionalism of your work.

   The printer can then photocopy your resume onto a good quality, 20# cotton bond paper. To keep your resume professional, you may select alternate paper colors from the off-white, buff, beige, and light gray categories; avoid trendy colors and pastels, as you may run the risk of biasing a potential employer against you on the simple basis of color choice. Remember; the by-word is "keep it professional."

HOW DO I HANDLE THE "TRICKY" INTERVIEW QUESTION?

And which ones are the tricky, negative or difficult questions? You'll know, simply because when they are asked, they'll probably make you do a hesitant double-take while you search for an answer. To answer such questions effectively, turn the "negative" around into a "positive".

For example, when asked "what are your greatest weaknesses" be honest and consider the type of position for which you are applying. If you are, say, an account clerk applying for a bookkeeping position, you might state that you have a tendency to be too thorough and detail-oriented, and that you'd like to work on finding a balance between speed and accuracy. In light of the job you are seeking, chances are that the employer will consider your "weakness" and asset! Who wouldn't like to have a self-avowed "detail" person working on their accounts!

Likewise, if you are a secretarial person seeking a new clerical job in a high student traffic office, you may cite that you have a tendency to become too involved in assisting people in solving their problems, and that this is something on which you need to work. Again, your "weakness" becomes quite the asset in performing well in a busy office with constant student requests.

If you do have a "negative" in your background, such as a very short-term job which you must explain, again turn the negative into a positive. You do not ever want to misrepresent the truth, as it is simply too easy to verify; but, you can admit the negative part of the statement quickly up front and close with the positive, leaving the employer with a good impression.

> For example, you may say, "yes, it's true that I worked at XYZ Corporation for only two months. It turned out that I did not have the skills necessary to do the job well, so we mutually agreed it would be best for me to leave. However, as a result of my stay there, I got to see how a large purchasing department functioned, and I feel I'm coming to you a stronger candidate for having had the experience."

Most negative questions can be turned around. In response to the question "what kind of personality rubs you the wrong way?", you can avoid the trap most people fall into by not really answering the question. An effective answer might be:

> "Well, I'd like to think I'm flexible enough to work with just about anybody. Everyone has their "good" days and their "bad" days, but I think I can roll with the punches and deal with most people."

You haven't singled out any one personality type, and you appear very flexible--a boon to most employers.

When asked the all familiar "tell me about yourself", the employer is looking to see how well you communicate in a narrative style. Don't go too far back in your personal history; as a matter of fact, a good suggestion may be to start telling your resume in a narrative form, speaking for one to two minutes. The employer will usually break in to ask more specific questions somewhere in that timeframe.

The best preparation you can have in dealing with negative questions is to review the following list and answer them to yourself ahead of time. If

you encounter them, or related derivatives of them, you won't be caught off-guard, and will probably feel more comfortable in dealing with them.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What do you think of our company?
3. What is it about this job that interests you most?
4. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
5. What do you consider your major strengths?
6. What do you consider your major weaknesses?
7. What do you like to do in your spare time?
8. What causes you to lose your temper?
9. Would you fire me if I came late to work three days in a row?
10. How long will you stay with our company?
11. What kind of decisions are most difficult for you?
12. What motivates you?
13. How can you contribute to our company?
14. Are you a self-starter?
15. Do you really enjoy work?
16. What are you doing now to improve or update yourself?
17. Do you mind overtime work?
18. Would you hire you?

DOES IT REALLY MATTER IF I WRITE A THANK-YOU NOTE?

Yes! Not only are you extending the common courtesy of thanking your interviewer for his or her time, but it also brings your name up to their attention again a day or two after the initial interview. When your note arrives, it is usually attached to your application/resume, thereby bringing your paperwork to the top of the pile. Psychologically, that gives you a big advantage, since things at the top of the pile are in the interviewer's constant sight. You would be amazed at the number of people who neglect this important step of the job search process. I have had employers tell me that, all other things being equal, the job went to the candidate who took the time to follow-up with a "thank-you".

It need not be lengthy; all you have to do is express your enthusiasm and interest in the position, and thank the interviewer for his/her time. a brief example follows:

Dear Mr/Ms._____:

This is just a brief note to thank you for taking the time to talk with me today about the _____ position with your firm.

After talking to you about the job, I am definitely interested in the position, and I would like the chance to show how well I can handle it. I would be delighted to share any additional information with you at your convenience.

You can reach me at (414) 691-5500. Thank you again for your time and encouragement.

Sincerely,